POLICING IN NOVA SCOTIA - A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Background

Every Nova Scotian should expect an adequate and effective level of policing services, regardless of where they reside. Under the Provincial *Police Act*, every municipality is responsible for maintaining an adequate and effective police service at its own expense. The Province sets standards and must ensure that adequate and effective policing is in fact being provided to the citizens of Nova Scotia.

Police service delivery and the costs related to it is a product of a provincial/municipal service exchange. Some municipalities have direct contracts with the RCMP, while others receive their policing from the RCMP through an extension to the provincial policing contract. Others maintain their own municipal police forces. These models are funded from municipal property taxes. The Province contracts with the RCMP to deliver provincial policing services, which includes everything from highway patrols to identification units. These services are most often referred to as centralized services. However, given the variety of policing models in the province, some services provided centrally (and paid by the Province) are also funded and provided by the larger municipal units. In other cases, municipalities are able to utilize central (provincially funded) services at no direct cost. The end result is a system where some services are duplicated and costs are not shared equally or fairly.

The level of services provided across the province varies greatly, which is not a problem provided basic service is provided. Minimum standards have not been defined. Therefore, individuals in various parts of the province have no assurance that they will receive an adequate level of basic service. The events of September 11th have also focused our attention on the need for heightened security and for cohesive, coordinated emergency response plans. In order to meet these needs, we must implement basic standards, work to eliminate duplication and more efficiently use policing resources.

The reality of policing that municipalities face today has already resulted in a rationalization of services as detachments and municipal forces amalgamate to service larger areas. That trend is likely to continue over the coming years.

In order to equalize both services and costs and to have a uniform basic standard for police services, the Province initiated a strategic review of police service delivery which included broad consultation with the policing community and municipalities. Eighteen issues were identified and released in a discussion paper, known as the *White Paper on Policing*. Subsequently, the Province released its proposed responses. As a result, most of the issues have been acted upon and will be further discussed in this paper.

Still outstanding is the issue of central policing services. In other words, what services should be funded and provided by the Province for the benefit of all Nova Scotians, which should be municipal

and what is the most equitable allocation of costs? In order to facilitate discussion and understanding, in this paper we define **central services** as services which are provincially funded and are provided to and utilized by municipalities across the province.

Core services are those services which are funded and provided directly by municipalities.

Operational support services are services which each municipality may provide directly, obtain from another municipality or the RCMP (on a fee for services basis or insurance premium model).

White Paper Process

After much consideration, the department has recognized that the *White Paper* process has reached the limits of its potential. Most issues have been resolved as a result of the *White Paper*. We must now explore other methods to deal with the remaining issue. Our goal is a common one - to ensure that every citizen enjoys an adequate and effective level of police service delivery. Our challenge is to find a funding formula that is fair, reasonable and equitable. We must also be mindful of emerging police issues that have an impact on the safety and security of all Nova Scotians, such as organized crime and the battle against terrorism.

We are soliciting input regarding this outstanding issue, on the process to resolve it and on the changes we will be considering to the *Police Act*. We know our objective, but the means to achieve it is up to each and all of us. In order to provide adequate, effective and integrated police service delivery, we must find a method to ensure that services and facilities will be shared where possible, that costs are allocated fairly and law enforcement efforts are maximized. This does not mean one police service. It does means that the safety and security of Nova Scotians will be best protected within our collective means.

Issues Resolved and Ready for Implementation
Minimum Standards

We believe that uniform basic standards are critical to the continued safety and security of Nova Scotians. Much consultation and discussion have been held with police agencies regarding core standards. In fact, as a result of consultation and initiatives of their own, the vast majority of police agencies already comply with or exceed these basic standards we are putting forward. To that end, core standards are to be adopted province-wide by all police agencies by April 1, 2006, regardless of their service providers. For the overwhelming number of Nova Scotians, this will not mean any change to their basic level of policing since they are already receiving the basic minimum level of policing or more. These standards have been provided directly to police agencies through the Policing and Victim Services' Division, Department of Justice.

Municipal Consultation and Accountability

The Department of Justice will establish the Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards as the official consultation body for all municipalities on policing issues. Meetings will be held quarterly to discuss issues of mutual concern. Proposed policing standards will be discussed through this mechanism. Changes will be made to the *Police Act* to establish the authority of Police Advisory Boards for municipalities served by the RCMP.

Allocation of RCMP Costs – Report System

The Minister of Justice will direct the RCMP to develop a financial reporting system which will provide regular updates on the costs of providing policing services to the municipalities being served. The reporting system will be required as part of the Provincial Policing Services Agreement. The model will be developed in consultation with the RCMP, the Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards and approved by the Department of Justice.

Structure of Police Services

The Province will not direct municipalities regarding the structure of policing services. Municipalities are free to choose the model they feel appropriate. The only role for the Province is to ensure that an adequate and effective basic level of policing is maintained.

Audits – Measuring Standards and Service Delivery

The Province will establish a dedicated audit/evaluation section responsible for conducting audits of all police agencies in Nova Scotia. The audit section will be staffed by departmental officials, as well as municipal and RCMP auditors. All police agencies will be audited to Provincial standards.

Governance – Providing Civilian Oversight for RCMP

The department will establish Police Advisory Boards for municipalities with RCMP as the police service. The advisory boards will be established through legislation.

The Right to Strike

The Province is willing to assist municipalities and police agencies find an appropriate model for dispute resolution if they agree. The current system, which includes the right to strike, should be reconsidered based upon the mutual agreement of the parties affected.

Police Recruitment

Working with the Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association, the Province has developed a Recruit Certification Program to ensure minimum levels of service and standards are met for new officers. Municipalities will have a chance to provide input on standards through the newly structured Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards.

Training – Maintaining Professional Standards

The issue of police training continues to be addressed through the Provincial Training and Standards Advisory Committee. The Province continues to take an active role in providing appropriate training and has recently announced the creation of a Justice Learning Centre in Truro to further facilitate professional development in a cost-effective manner.

Proceeds of Crime

The Province has signed an agreement with the federal government on the method to share proceeds of crime. To date, approximately $113,000 has been shared with municipalities. Should an organized crime unit be established, additional funds could be available through the seizure and disposal of assets.

Auxiliary Policing

The *Police Act* will be revised to allow municipal police agencies to use police auxiliaries. Uniform standards will be developed for auxiliary policing services, based upon consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Cost of Justice – Dealing with Escalating Court Costs

The department continues to examine all possible avenues to reduce costs relating to the administration of justice, from disclosure to Court attendance costs for police. Consultation and coordination will continue.

Setting Standards

The Training and Standards Advisory Committee was established and will be expanded to include representatives of the Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards and front-line police officers. Standards will be set by the Province and will be reflected in amendments made to the *Police Act*.

Compensation

The issues of budgets, wages and benefits are matters which are most appropriately dealt with by the employee and the employer. The Province has no role in dealing with these issues.

Legislative Changes

Changes to the legislative framework which governs policing in this province are expected to be introduced in the Legislative session held in 2003-04. Consultations with key groups have begun with this paper and will continue as the new legislation is developed.

Extraordinary Costs

As is currently the case, the department provides financial assistance when a reinvestigation is ordered. The Province will coordinate such assignments and will develop standards for such incidents. As well, the Province will develop standards and will inspect police lockups.

Issues Outstanding
Operational Support Services – Allocating the Costs

The policing community is constantly facing new challenges, increased expectations and costs. The financing of police services is complex. The inequities faced in the allocation of policing costs is a reflection of that fact. Operational support services are needed in order for police agencies to respond adequately to the communities they serve. While they are essential to any police force, the department feels it is not necessary for municipal forces to directly maintain these support services, though that is an option if they so choose. Therefore, these services, such as identification units, police dogs, etc., could be obtained from an adjoining municipal force, or possibly from the RCMP on a user pay basis, or on an insurance premium model.

The following is a non-exclusive list of issues that should be considered:

- Categories and functions would be defined by a committee of police professionals and will include services such as identification units, police service dogs and polygraph services.
- Full service police agencies (such as Halifax Regional Police, Cape Breton Regional) currently fund and provide these services.
- Costs could be recovered on a user-pay system or on an insurance premium basis for those areas using the service.

- For those police agencies who are not considered full service, but do have some expanded services (such as police service dogs), the cost would be lower.

- Full service police agencies would have no costs, eliminating an inequity that currently exists.

- Province would still subsidize central services to ensure services could be used for provincial purposes (such as Swissair, APSEA).

- Province could reallocate monies recovered through provision of redeployed resources for the benefit of all Nova Scotians

Leveling the Playing Field

If policing in Nova Scotia is to use its resources most effectively, the true costs of policing must be recognized and costs must be allocated fairly. Consideration could be given to reinvesting provincial resources into police services that benefit the whole province, such as an organized crime strategy and counter-terrorism efforts. As stated earlier, we must collectively decide what central services the Province should fund and provide for the benefit of all municipalities.

For example, a provincially funded organized crime unit could establish new positions for both the RCMP and municipal officers. The unit could focus on the seizure and forfeiture of assets, through an enterprise crime unit. Revenues from enterprise crime could be then shared with the municipal units.

Provincial funds could also be directed to anti-terrorism efforts. Funds could be channeled into augmenting our capacity to deal with hazardous materials to providing specialized training for police officers. This is especially timely, given the federal anti-terrorism legislation which has major implications for policing services.

Provincially operated units such as Emergency Response Teams use municipal, provincial and federal RCMP resources. The Province could examine the possibility of using only provincial/federal resources for these teams to reduce the need to access municipal resources for the training and deployment of these units. We must also explore possible savings related to joint training, shared space for specialized services and the elimination of service duplication.

In order to ensure that every citizen enjoys an adequate and effective level of police service delivery, we must find a model that is fair, reasonable and equitable. Your input will be critical as we move forward in the coming months.